



Transfer Stations: What is Your Fire Risk?

The Risk Pool has experienced several claims in recent years related to fires at solid waste transfer stations. These events have resulted in millions of dollars in damages to structures and machinery, disrupted services for the community, and created potential exposures for employees working at those facilities.



In a recent incident, a city employee arrived at work early and noticed smoke pouring from the solid waste transfer station building. A major fire had engulfed the facility, causing significant damage to the building and several pieces of mobile equipment onsite. The fire originated in a pile of waste that was stored overnight inside the structure.

Fire exposures and incidents can be prevented by developing and following basic protocols and best practices, including those listed below.

Policies and Best Practices

- Develop a “best practices plan” specific to your transfer station that addresses fire prevention, employee safety, and public safety. Coordinate with the local fire department to create a pre-fire plan of the facility that includes the layout of the facility, hazardous materials storage, access points, and available water supplies.
- Do not leave unprocessed materials inside the facility overnight, including loaded trailers or containers. The absence of stored waste material greatly reduces fire potential. Most fires in these types of facilities occur overnight and involved waste material left in the facility. ***In most instances, one of the identified corrective actions post-incident is to remove all waste material each day when the facility closes, but inspections of these facilities usually indicate this proactive practice is not regularly followed.***
- Continuously monitor debris piles as heat buildup and smoke are often early signs of combustion within a pile.
- Be observant of commercial and customer vehicles for potential “hot loads” and have a safe quarantine area to deposit suspect loads for further inspection.
- Keep material moving and do not allow waste to accumulate.
- Create public outreach and education about materials that do not belong in refuse collection containers.

Fire Detection & Suppression

- Ensure fire detection and suppression systems are monitored to notify first responders of a potential incident.
- Use heat detectors to monitor increasing heat inside the facility for early detection of combustion or fires.
- Have appropriate fire control equipment available (extinguishers, hose stations, etc.) to control fires in waste piles on tipping floors or surge pits.
- Ensure all refuse vehicles have fire extinguishers or mobile fire detection and suppression systems.

Additional Resources: [TMLIRP Media Library](#): Fire Extinguishers at Work, Disk #455 and Loss Prevention TIPS: “Transfer Stations: Are your Operations Safe?”